5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
OI17 Murngin OI17

Character, Arts and Crafts

Personal Character.

152 In personal character these aborigines are light-hearted and
522 happy, with a great fondness for practical joking. Anything which places another in a position of discomfiture is hugely enjoyed. They are quick and rather violent tempered, but on the whole their temper is shortlived.

152 A comparatively trifling offence will quickly result in a general
579 disturbance, in which both sexes engage, and during which weapons are brandished and an amazing amount of mutual abuse is indulged in, but usually little serious damage is done, and, having talked themselves out, life soon returns to its normal course.

157 As might be expected, there are some few individuals of a more sullen and anti-social type who become notorious as trouble-makers, and who constitute a difficult problem for their own people. The outstanding weakness of the aborigine's character is his want of a sense of personal responsibility. Rarely does a man act on his own initiative or assume and maintain an individual attitude in regard to any matter.

[157] This is undoubtedly accounted for by the fact that in the
[182] aboriginal community the unit is not the individual, but the
614 tribal horde. The tribe or group stands or falls together. Every
672 member of it shares in the honour or disgrace of any one of its number. An offence by one member is regarded by another tribe or division as an offence by the whole of the offender's division. All are held as being equally guilty.

614 In such serious offences as occasion the shedding of blood,
628 the members of the injured tribe or division make no special
672 attempt to avenge themselves upon the individual who has actually committed the offence, but are as well satisfied if they succeed in punishing any member of the party to which he belongs. Though the tribe as a whole may strongly disapprove of the action of one of their number, by which action hostility has been created between them and another tribe, they, knowing they are all involved, must nevertheless stand behind this particular individual.

182 In this way is the individual relieved of the responsibility of
157 his own actions, and does not personally realise their results
614 EITHER FOR GOOD OR ILL.
[672]

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

159 We Wangurri clans-people are a bush people (pages 16-29, 42). We are very strong and very fierce and good fighters. All the coast people are afraid of us. Our country comes to the salt water at only one place on Arnhem Bay (map, page 40). It was here that we saw the Macassar. They brought [439] us presents of rice, syrup, calico, tomahawks, dugout canoes, knives, and gin. We gave them pearl shell, pearls, tortoise shell, sandalwood, and other woods they use for medicine. We helped them gather trepang (pages 456-458).

159 273 439 579 At these times, when the Macassar prahus took down their sails and masts and their men disembarked, our old men drank plenty, for it was then they got all the gin they wanted for the presents they gave the Macassar man. There would always be big fights. In the morning you could see blood everywhere and many people were killed. While the old men fought with the knives from around their belts and with tomahawks, clubs, and spears, we children used to sneak in and eat the food that they had left. We always waited our chance and rushed in and ran away again.

159 431 609 I can remember one day my father's giving me some tortoise shell and saying, "Mahkarella, you go and give this to that Macassar man and make friends with him so that when he comes again he will know you, and you will know him, and you will have a feeling of friendship for each other." I did. The Macassar man talked to me but I didn't understand him. I forget the rest.

159 574 Another thing I remember when I was very small: I went with my father through the Gwiyamil clan country to the Wulkara people for a corroboree. This is the path our ranga took in the stories we know about him, and those people are also Sand Fly people (pages 33-35), just as we Wangurri are.

159 857 Before we were circumcised we little boys played spear-fighting games, talked about sneaking up and killing a man, and we threw clay mud balls at each other. When it was hot in the rainy season we swam in the sea (pages 125-128).

Later we played being grown men and women with the little girls. We made little fires in the sand beaches. We went out just like our fathers and pretended to spear fish, and the little girls went into the bush and brought home bush food (vegetable food). We made little bark huts just like our fathers' and mothers'. The girls would come in and lie beside us as our wives and we were their husbands.

When we were little boys, others boys who were a little bit bigger joked us about the wives we were going to marry. This made me feel very ashamed. Little girls joked the same way. They also became ashamed. When we got bigger we weren't ashamed any more. We were glad.

159 867 I think I always knew it was wrong to "play with" a girl of the Yiritcha